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## TEXTS ADOPTED

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### **P10\_TA(2025)0313**

#### **Organisational mismanagement of the European personnel selection office (EPSO) competitions**

#### **European Parliament resolution of 27 November 2025 on organisational mismanagement of European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) competitions (2025/2880(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Article 227 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
  - having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular Article 41 thereof on the right to good administration,
  - having regard to Petition No 0525/2025 submitted by an EU citizen on alleged organisational issues faced by candidates taking part in European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) competitions,
  - having regard to Rule 233(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas EPSO is responsible for selecting staff for all EU institutions, bodies and agencies, and must uphold the highest standards of professionalism, impartiality and transparency;
- B. whereas the democratic legitimacy and efficiency of the EU institutions is founded on the services of a highly competent, independent and multilingual EU public administration which is equally accessible to every EU citizen in the most objective manner possible;
- C. whereas Petition No 0525/2025 expresses serious concerns over repeated organisational and technical failures in EPSO competitions over the past two years, including the cancellation of tests and competitions, frequent reruns of test sessions, excessively long timelines and poor communication with candidates;

- D. whereas representatives of the staff committees and the trade unions have also repeatedly expressed their concerns about the malfunctioning of EPSO;
- E. whereas transparent and fair recruitment procedures are essential to safeguard equal access for all EU citizens and to maintain public trust in EU institutions;
- F. whereas the petitioner and other candidates affected report substantial mental distress and loss of trust in the fairness and reliability of the EU recruitment process;
- G. whereas candidates invest significant time and financial resources in preparing for EPSO examinations;
- H. whereas the European Ombudsman has concluded, in several separate inquiries<sup>1</sup>, that EPSO committed maladministration in its handling of candidate complaints, particularly in relation to remote testing procedures, platform deficiencies and inconsistent communication regarding technical issues, including in the case where a postpartum mother had been put at a disadvantage;
- I. whereas the Ombudsman has criticised EPSO for its inflexibility, contradictory instructions, unjustified decisions and its rejection of valid complaints even when candidates had followed official guidelines for reporting problems;

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<sup>1</sup> Decision of the European Ombudsman of 8 July 2024 on how the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) handled a complaint concerning issues in the context of remote testing as part of selection procedure EPSO/AST/151/22-3; decision of the European Ombudsman of 8 July 2024 on how the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) dealt with a complaint about technical problems in a selection procedure (EPSO/AST155/22 – Assistants in the field of operational security); decision on of the European Ombudsman of 8 July 2024 on how the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) handled a complaint concerning the unavailability of proctors during a remote test in a selection procedure for EU staff EPSO/AD/398/2; decision of the European Ombudsman of 21 June 2024 on how the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) dealt with a complaint concerning technical difficulties experienced during remote testing in the context of a selection procedure for the Junior Professionals Programme; decision of the European Ombudsman of 12 December 2024 on how the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) excluded a candidate from a selection procedure for EU staff (EPSO/AST/151/22).

- J. whereas the Ombudsman has made several suggestions to EPSO<sup>2</sup> for improving how it carries out tests, including giving candidates the possibility of taking tests in physical test centres and providing clear and comprehensive information on how to make a complaint, as well as improving how it deals with complaints;
- K. whereas according to a European Court of Auditors special report<sup>3</sup>, 35 % fewer EPSO competitions were launched and 38 % fewer were completed between 2019 and 2023 compared to the previous five years, which resulted to a reduced number of candidates available for recruitment and subsequently a significant increase in the number of temporary staff employed in permanent posts (192 % increase at the Commission, 256 % in the Council and 89 % in Parliament);
- L. whereas the increasing recourse to temporary staff puts in question the EU institutions' commitment to an independent EU public service recruited in an open manner, with recruitment processes accessible to all EU citizens through widely advertised open competitions;
- M. whereas the last competition for generalist administrators was organised as far back as 2019; whereas the new competition has already been postponed several times;
- N. whereas the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled in 2023<sup>4</sup> that EPSO's restrictions on the choice of second language in certain competitions were unlawful, finding that the Commission had failed to provide sufficient justification for limiting the options to English, French and German, thereby discriminating against candidates from Member States where none of these languages is the most widely spoken;
- O. whereas while an EU public service may require several working languages, the recruitment procedures should allow candidates to choose language combinations that best allow them to express their competencies at the different stages of a recruitment procedure;
- P. whereas EPSO has introduced testing in all 24 official EU languages and is responsible for the quality and clarity of test questions across

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<sup>2</sup> Decision of the European Ombudsman of 22 January 2024 in own-initiative inquiry concerning the use by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) of remote testing in selection procedures to recruit EU civil servants.

<sup>3</sup> European Court of Auditors, Special report 24/2024: EU Civil service – A flexible employment framework, insufficiently used to improve workforce management, 7 November 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Judgment of the Court of Justice of 16 February 2023, *European Commission v Italian Republic*, C-623/20 P, ECLI:EU:C:2023:97.

all languages in which the examinations are offered but disparities remain in the quality of tests in some of the languages offered;

- Q. whereas the European Data Protection Supervisor, in its audit report of 25 April 2023 on EPSO's remotely proctored testing via external service providers, concluded that remote testing profoundly changes the processing of personal data in open competitions and has an increased impact on the right to privacy and the protection of candidates' personal data; whereas it recommended that EPSO pause remote testing and carefully assess its use, as EPSO had not measured the effectiveness of fully remote testing compared to on-site testing;
- R. whereas a malfunctioning EPSO seriously undermines the credibility and damages the reputation of the EU selection procedures, thereby harming the image of the entire EU civil service;
- S. whereas the COVID-19 pandemic triggered changes in EPSO testing formats, including the adoption of remote testing, but, according to the Ombudsman's decision of 22 January 2024, these transitions were not implemented with adequate oversight, technical preparation or accountability;
- T. whereas remote testing, if implemented seamlessly, can have a significant positive impact on the ability of candidates all over the world, even in remote locations, to access competitions, by eliminating the need to travel, while also having additional environmental benefits;
- U. whereas reliance on computer testing with complex measures to ensure system integrity may put categories of candidates at a disadvantage and introduces new types of discrimination stemming from different levels of computer proficiency;
- V. whereas EU recruitment processes should be accessible to all EU citizens regardless of any EPSO budgetary constraints;
- W. whereas many candidates have expressed concern about the lack of access to appropriate and reliable IT tools and equipment, including the in-test notepad and calculator for remote testing, and the lack of in-person test centres, which could ensure a more controlled, standardised and equitable examination environment; whereas digital tools, if properly managed, can increase accessibility, inclusiveness and sustainability in recruitment, but require robust infrastructure, oversight and candidate support; whereas EPSO should respond to all complaints and subsequent administrative appeals;
- X. whereas the reduction in EPSO competitions and the parallel increase in the recruitment of temporary and contractual staff has led to growing precariousness within the EU institutions,

undermining the model of social and secure employment that the EU should embody; whereas the excessive reliance on private contractors in key public functions such as regular and permanent staff selection risks weakening institutional sovereignty and accountability;

- Y. whereas the impact of technical failures is unequal and particularly affects candidates from peripheral regions or with fewer economic resources, thereby exacerbating inequalities;
  - Z. whereas in 2023, several specialist competitions were affected by issues such as cancellation or the rerunning of test sessions;
  - AA. whereas IT technical issues on EPSO's new Single Candidate Portal have also been reported by many candidates;
1. Strongly condemns the repeated technical, organisational and procedural shortcomings in the functioning of EPSO over the last two years, which have had a significant impact on citizens' trust in the EU recruitment process; strongly believes that EPSO should prioritise solving all its severe shortcomings in organising selection procedures, to avoid further serious damage to its intended role, which is to secure the services of officials of the highest standards of ability, efficiency and integrity for the EU institutions, recruited on the broadest possible geographical basis from among nationals of the EU Member States;
  2. Stresses the urgent need to restore the integrity, transparency, accountability and predictability of EPSO selection procedures in order to repair the reputational damage done to the EU institutions, ensure proper functioning of the EU civil service and guarantee equal treatment of candidates from all Member States;
  3. Acknowledges the significant amount of effort, time and resources that candidates put into preparing for and completing the selection procedures, often at the expense of their professional and personal lives; expresses its dissatisfaction at the negative impact of the organisational mismanagement of EPSO competitions on candidates' psychological well-being and their financial and personal circumstances owing to the various shortcomings of the selection process, such as repeated cancellations or over-reliance on digital technology and artificial intelligence (AI) solutions without proper human oversight;
  4. Calls on the Commission, with input from the Ombudsman and independent experts in digital testing, to carry out a thorough, transparent and independent assessment of EPSO's management, systems, outsourcing and procedures, particularly with regard to the implementation of remote testing, its technological feasibility, the over-reliance on external contractors, including those using platforms with servers that are based outside the EU, the handling of

candidate complaints, and communication practices, with a view to addressing the causes of EPSO's maladministration and restoring trust in the EU recruitment process;

5. Urges EPSO to reintroduce on-site, EPSO-certified test facilities that would be accessible to candidates, in parallel with remote testing, giving candidates the option to choose their preferred mode, ensuring fair and uniform testing conditions, equal opportunities and inclusiveness; recalls that tests organised in EPSO test centres in the past did not face so many technical issues;
6. Urges EPSO to review its testing methods with a view to making them user-friendly and to put in place a system in which digital technology and AI will be subject to human oversight and verification by competent staff, at every step of the process; emphasises the need to establish a system based on maximum transparency and full accountability for all staff involved in the selection process, including EPSO's management; rejects any attempt to delegate to automated systems decisions that affect candidates' fundamental rights, since these must remain the responsibility of qualified public officials under democratic scrutiny;
7. Stresses that EPSO is responsible for the quality and clarity of the language used in all 24 languages in which tests are available and that it must urgently address shortcomings in this regard; strongly condemns the inadequate quality and lack of consistency in the second-language verbal examinations conducted in official EU languages other than English or French, underlining that this practice constitutes a structural disadvantage for candidates choosing official EU languages other than English or French and undermines multilingualism, equal treatment and fairness in EU recruitment procedures;
8. Criticises the current examination system whereby candidates must first be evaluated via a computer-based test before they can demonstrate subject-specific knowledge, with the risk of filtering out qualified candidates for specific posts;
9. Calls on EPSO to ensure equal access to testing and recruitment procedures for persons with disabilities, including persons with learning disabilities and neurodivergent conditions, in order to accommodate their special needs, with the ultimate objective of avoiding any form of discrimination or disadvantage, and to secure genuine accessibility to the EU public service for persons with disabilities; notes that EPSO is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for candidates with specific needs owing to their disability or medical condition, and stresses that the evaluation process must be transparent and subject to an appeal procedure;

10. Calls on EPSO to make use of systematic anonymous post-test surveys by using an EU-secured platform and structured consultation, to continuously improve selection procedures and address recurring issues; calls on EPSO to include in its annual report an analysis of this feedback alongside annual statistics on applications, admissions and success rates broken down by country, in order to identify and correct imbalances;
11. Recommends that EPSO's contact point be enhanced with multilingual capacity and extended availability, so that it can assist candidates in-house and in real time during and after test sessions, with a particular focus on accessibility and inclusion;
12. Takes note of the EPSO Candidate Complaint Resolution Policy for Testing Events as a tool for clarifying how EPSO deals with complaints; calls on EPSO to improve the policy with a view to establishing and implementing a charter of candidates' rights, outlining clear rights, obligations, complaint procedures and redress mechanisms related to all stages and aspects of the selection procedures, including a commitment to respond to complaints as quickly as possible and in a transparent and candidate-friendly manner, with the possibility of review by an independent appeals body; highlights the need for inclusive, accessible and swift complaint and appeal processes, with multilingual capacity to assist candidates in real time and without having recourse to external contractors, including in situations where candidates face rejection or obstacles shortly before the start of or during testing, for reasons that could include AI-based identity verification or problems linked to the candidates' surroundings in remote mode;
13. Calls on EPSO to develop a transparent and comprehensive communications policy, including a clear and reliable competition timetable for each phase, and proactive updates, through multiple official channels, about changes to timelines, technical incidents and corrective measures; notes with dissatisfaction that there is no standard schedule for candidates to receive their results after sitting an examination;
14. Invites the EPSO leadership to consult the EPSO Management Board in a timely and meaningful way and to enter into more effective and direct dialogue with the staff representation bodies in the EU institutions, to consult them on possible improvements in the overall selection process, with a particular focus on testing and communication with candidates;
15. Calls on EPSO to ensure transparency of the criteria used when shortlisting candidates invited to sit the tests for CAST (Contract Agents Selection Tool) selection procedures; calls on EPSO to clearly communicate forthcoming CAST examination dates on its website with reasonable advance notice;

16. Notes that private companies offer preparation courses for EPSO competitions, at exorbitant costs to candidates, owing to the lack of sufficient pretest simulation and practice questions provided by EPSO; encourages EPSO to invest in better pretest simulation tools and practice platforms so that candidates can familiarise themselves with the system and reduce technical anxiety; highlights the need to provide clearer explanations of how tests and exercises are scored;
17. Encourages the Committee on Budgetary Control to constantly monitor the technical, organisational and procedural shortcomings in the functioning of EPSO that have been outlined in this resolution in its evaluation for the annual discharge of the Commission budget;
18. Recommends regular training for EPSO staff and test supervisors to ensure consistent and candidate-sensitive practices across all stages of competition cycles; deplores the use of standard replies to specific complaints and issues raised by candidates; strongly condemns the practice of using standard statements for the final assessment of candidate profiles when they are considered not to match the specific requirements;
19. Asks the Commission to propose appropriate and fair solutions for candidates directly affected by test cancellations, IT issues or procedural delays, such as flexible and swift retesting options;
20. Considers that the increasing reliance on temporary staff and short-term contracts in the EU institutions is also a direct consequence of EPSO's inefficiency, and might undermine the necessary stability and quality of EU public service employment; calls for urgent measures to reverse this trend and to guarantee dignified and secure working conditions;
21. Calls on the Commission to report to Parliament on the implementation of the requested reforms, including benchmarks and performance indicators, within six months of the adoption of this resolution;
22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the European Ombudsman and the European Personnel Selection Office.